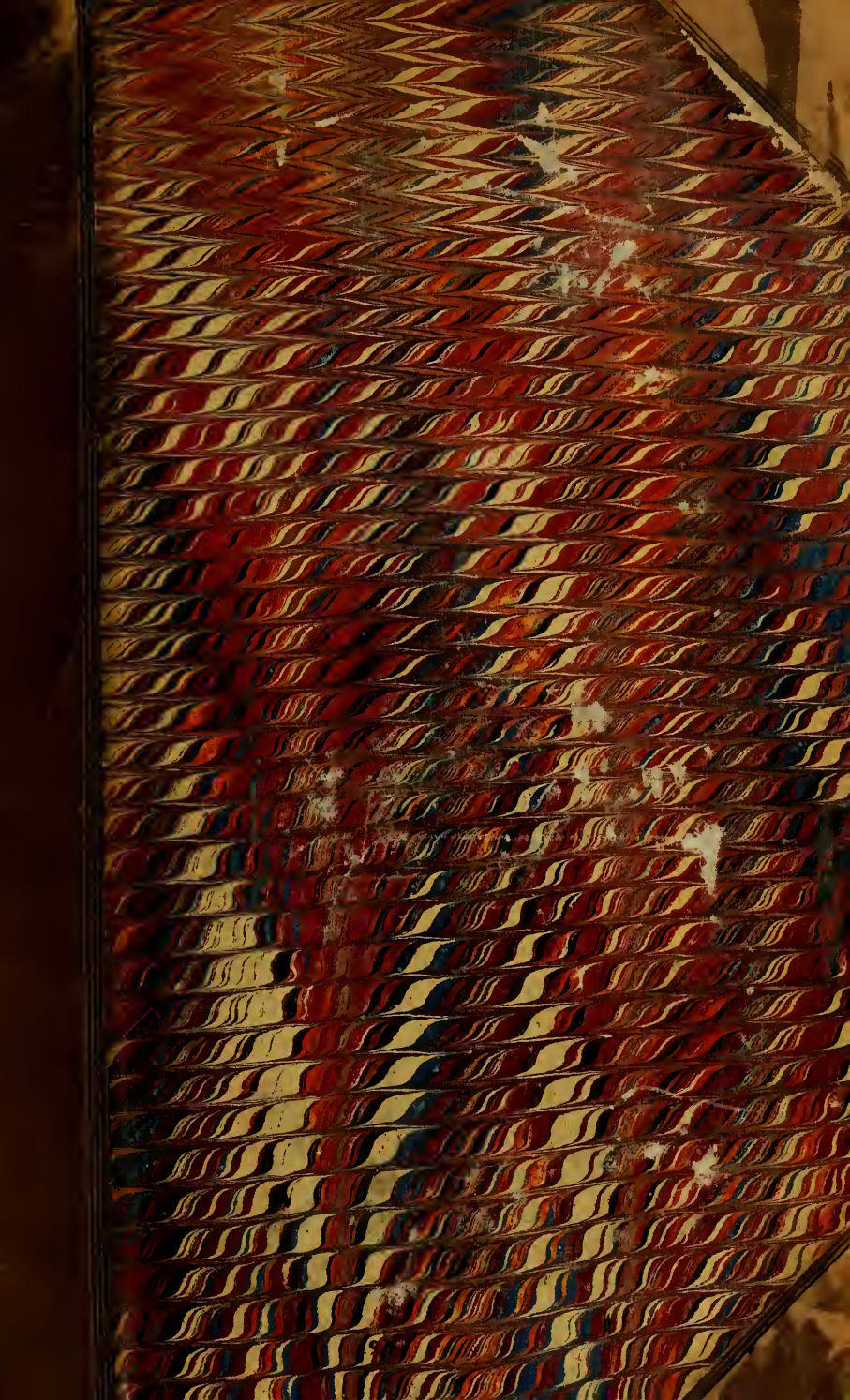






LIBRARY
OF THE
UNIVERSITY
OF ILLINOIS



13

ON THE EMPLOYMENT
OF
TRAINED NURSES

AMONG THE
LABOURING POOR,

CONSIDERED CHIEFLY IN RELATION TO
SANITARY REFORM AND THE ARTS OF LIFE.

By A PHYSICIAN.

LONDON:
JOHN CHURCHILL, NEW BURLINGTON STREET.

MDCCCLX.

LONDON :
REED AND PARDON, PRINTERS,
PATERNOSTER ROW.

PREFACE.

DURING the last ten years I have seen much of the sick poor, not only in hospital practice, but at their own homes; and I have, therefore, had frequent opportunities of witnessing their distressed and helpless position when attacked with severe illness. The visits and gifts of the charitable are too uncertain and irregular to be of much real service, and are, besides, not calculated to meet the most pressing difficulties of their condition. What is most wanted is knowledge and skill to apply methodically the means at hand, and to place the sufferers in the most favourable position for recovery. I have endeavoured in the following pages to show the necessity that exists for an organised system of nursing, and which, if fairly carried out, would, I believe, be attended with permanent good results; for it would combine effective assistance with practical instruction in the laws of health and the arts of life.

It is a subject about which I have felt deeply and thought long; and I trust that the scheme I have

tried to advocate may meet with the approval and support of those benevolent persons who wisely strive to lead their poorer friends and neighbours to prudent habits, and that independence and self-reliance which ought to be the normal condition of the industrial classes. In the words of that eminent physician and good man, the late Dr. Alison, I address myself, "To those who have been accustomed to look upon the poor, not as objects of disgust and aversion, but as brothers and sisters in affliction, who are born to the same hopes as themselves, look up to the same Father in heaven, and trust to the mediation of the same Redeemer; to those who remember that charity is the highest of Christian duties, that our Saviour himself chose to be a beggar that we for his sake might not despise the poor."

EMPLOYMENT

ETC.

THE question of employing trained and educated nurses among the labouring poor in their own homes, has not yet received the attention that its importance demands. Nor is it an easy question to handle ; for before attempting to carry out any scheme in this direction, the beneficial effects of which are intended to be practical and permanent, it is necessary to make ourselves masters of the facts, —to ascertain the actual condition of the poor, by viewing their position from their own cottages. We may then, perhaps, be able to form a distinct conception of a plan which would be likely to ameliorate, to some extent at least, their sad lot.

Let us first consider the need that exists for such an order of women in time of sickness. No expense is spared in providing drugs and medical attendants for the working classes ; indeed, the expenditure is out of all proportion to the amount of good done ; and it is difficult to form any conception of the amount of talent, time, and labour that is absolutely wasted from the want of an organised and efficient system of nursing. The hasty visit of the doctor will be of little avail, if the diet and regimen are not

attended to—if there is no one present who can form an intelligent comprehension of medical directions—if the unfortunate patient is breathing a poisonous atmosphere, in a close, unventilated dwelling, amidst dirt, confusion, and disorder—if there is no one present who possesses any knowledge at all of the first principles of sanitary science, or the laws of our common nature.

Furthermore, there is not only complete ignorance of nursing and the ordinary management of the sick, but the poor do not know how to prepare the simple food that may be ordered in a palatable form; they do not know how to prepare or to use the applications that may be recommended, or how to administer the remedies that may be prescribed: such as the preparation and administration of injections; the application of leeches, rollers, blisters, poultices, fomentation; the management of bed sores, and many other requirements that I need not allude to at present. In short, when severe illness with its attendant difficulties and perplexities comes to humble dwellings, there is no skilled assistance procurable under existing circumstances, unless there fortunately happens to be a neighbour with a little more intelligence than that of the average population around. Of sympathy and kindness indeed there is no lack; the clergyman calls to give religious consolation, and recommends patient submission to the dispensation of Providence, but he feels himself useless as far as giving any practical help is concerned; he can do nothing but give away money, which the poor do not know how to use. Again,

there is the lady or district visitor: she also calls with a real desire to relieve, but she generally knows no more how to render any effectual assistance, and is as helpless and useless as the clergyman. All she can do, is to send from her own kitchen some food in an eatable form; which, however, is often very improper for the sick man, whose stomach, not being accustomed to luxuries, is deranged by such an unusual abundance of nourishment, and if taken before an acute disease is subdued, it may excite serious complications, and he may, therefore, be literally "killed with kindness."

Under these discouraging circumstances, with so many opposing forces to counteract the benefits that medicine might confer, the most skilful physician will be utterly baffled. He will discover that his orders and directions are not carried out, for they are neither understood nor appreciated, and he will find himself beaten at every point. He therefore becomes careless and indifferent as to the result of his treatment, or he retires in despair from such a hopeless warfare.

Having thus shortly and imperfectly sketched the helpless state of the industrial classes during severe illness, let us next proceed to consider the result of their ordinary sanitary condition, and of their ignorance of the arts of life. There are but few out of the ranks of the medical profession who can form any idea, or indeed would credit, the vast amount of human misery and pain which originates from causes easily prevented, as the remedies mostly lie within the power of the sufferers themselves. Putrescent

matter, bad ventilation, and close living, are well ascertained causes of the fevers which inflict such terrible sufferings upon the poor; they are unconscious and ignorant of these well-established facts, which, if known to them, might be so easily prevented by common foresight and caution.

The most perfect machinery for cleansing and draining our streets, and for insuring the inhabitants an adequate supply of good air and good water, will not reach the evils that exist in the houses of the poor; and which inspectors of nuisances, police regulations, boards of health, and legislative enactments, are unable to grapple with. Nor will improved dwellings and sanitary laws be of any avail, as long as the inhabitants of those dwellings are ignorant of the common laws of health, for the real causes of their misery would be still untouched: such as noisome collections in private houses giving out poisonous gases, uncleanness of the person, and absence of ventilation. However ill-planned and defective the dwelling may be, there is no reason why it should be dirty, noisome, and unventilated. If the best arranged house, supplied with every convenience that modern science can suggest, was inhabited by ignorant persons of uncleanly habits, it would very soon become a disgrace and a nuisance. These evils, as I have just said, can be remedied only by individuals and families, each for themselves; and if sanitary science is not understood or appreciated, they will not tolerate any interference of which they do not see the benefit.

After this short statement of some of the causes

from which so much needless suffering and pain grow, terrible in extent and agonising to bear, we come to another weighty matter, and that is ignorance of the arts of life. Every rational man or woman who is in the habit of visiting the cottages of the poor, will confess that a great deal of the squalid misery that is witnessed there does not arise so much from destitution as from ignorance and bad management; and, consequently, that the condition of the working classes might be very different from what it is: for in most instances, the proximate cause of their suffering does not arise from insufficient wages, but from want of knowledge how to make the most of their earnings. And it will also be granted that charity does nothing but increase the evil, as it tends to breed poverty and helplessness. Most persons of any experience will therefore allow, that nothing presses harder upon the narrow households of the working classes as want of training in domestic economy. From want of knowledge they are much more improvident than wealthy people. From want of knowledge, materials are not only wasted, but the food they attempt to prepare does not satisfy the palate, and frequently deranges the stomach and digestion. The poor do not know what kind of food is the most economical, wholesome, and nourishing, and they are also deplorably ignorant as to what kind of diet and regimen is most suitable for young children and infants.

But to continue our postulates: The difficulties that lie in the way of improvement are appalling; the greatest obstacle to be met with being the stolid

indifference of the poor themselves, and their disinclination to be meddled with. The reasons for this are apparent enough, when we reflect upon how little time they can spare from work; their numerous family, cares, and perplexities; the want of space and the crowded state of their narrow dwellings. Their bodies, too, are exhausted, not only from hard work, but from a deficiency of wholesome and properly prepared food; and their blood is poisoned, and the action of the heart depressed, from breathing a polluted atmosphere. In addition to all this, the chronic state of poverty they live in must be remembered, and the mental disquietudes and entanglements attending it from which they can see no way of escape. Innumerable evils grow out of this state of things, for the victims are driven from their uncomfortable, squalid, and miserable rooms to the tavern, where a large proportion of their earnings is spent; and it must be allowed that there are many excuses to be made for them. One of the strongest inducements to intemperance, is that sense of depression and general weakness which excites a craving for stimulants, to arouse the nervous system from a state of prostration induced by breathing foul air, and which they know from past experience will give them transient relief. Besides, we ought to recollect that they have, in many instances, nothing worthy of the name of home to go to. Too often there is nothing there to encourage provident habits, or any other virtue. The house is dirty, the children are uncared for, every social and moral tie goes, and we need not be surprised that the warm, well-lighted

parlour of the public-house should be so often the pleasantest home for the working man. The consequences are disastrous: for it is as certain that continued misery, reckless and dissipated habits, will ultimately lead to vice and crime, or to black despair, insanity,* and premature death, as that continued neglect of functional irregularity leads to chronic disease and organic disorder.

Now, in matters relating to the arts of life, it is the women who are chiefly concerned, and it is a melancholy fact, that there is nothing taught that particularly form the duties of women in domestic life: indeed, the women of all classes in this country are brought up to be utterly incompetent to the management of domestic or any other affairs, and they consequently do not possess the commonest knowledge that would be required from the manager of a working man's home. If the wife has no knowledge of domestic economy, however well educated and attractive in other respects, miserable will be the doom of the man who marries her. His home will be dreary and comfortless, and he will in time probably be driven to the gin-shop. His children will be brought up in squalor, and

* "An official report just published by the parochial authorities of Marylebone, states that insanity has lately increased to such an extent amongst the working classes, that none but those whose duties bring them into contact with the sufferers can form any idea of its fearful spread. There are no less than 494 chargeable to the parish. In St. Pancras insanity also prevails to an unusual amount, especially among the humbler classes. It is to be hoped that this painful fact will be made the subject of official and medical inquiry, with a view to tracing its origin, and to retard, if possible, its progress."—*Lancet*, February, 1853.

she herself will be thriftless, and will ultimately become slatternly.

“Not to know of things remote
From use obscure and subtle, *but to know*
That which before us lies in daily life
Is the prime wisdom.”

Such a state of things existing, with earnings that might insure comfort if not prosperity, seems to prove that no legislation can cure the evil. The character of the labouring poor must be changed, for the causes may be found in the ignorance and reckless habits of the people, and the remedy must be sought in the improvement of the home—not only generally by means of lectures and cheap literature, but by direct personal intercourse; not only by talking, but by showing the poor practically “how to set about it.”

Another evil to which the poor are especially liable, and which is also to some extent at least remediable, is mental anxiety; and as it is a fruitful cause of many formidable diseases, I shall make a passing allusion to it. Indeed, it is the physician alone who can form any idea of the vast amount of physical suffering that is caused by mental trouble; for in that may found the most active and incessant principle of that frightful series of organic changes which constitutes pathology. It is only during the prevalence of epidemics, that the effects are prominently seen. Anxiety depresses the heart's action, diminishes nervous power, and prostrates the whole system, and the sufferer consequently falls an easy victim to cholera, fever, or any

other zymotic malady that may prevail. But the daily care, and more especially the dread and anticipation of future evils, acting upon a system ill nourished by unwholesome and badly cooked food, does its deadly work more slowly, but as surely as the poison of epidemic disease. It is unnecessary to dwell on this subject, for the powerful influence exercised by the mind over the body is perfectly well known to every one, however ignorant he may be of the structure and functions of the human frame. Personal experience *feelingly* persuades us of its truth. A sense of shame, for instance, will immediately crimson the cheek, and fear will make the heart knock against the side and paralyse the limbs.

Now for the plans proposed, or in operation, to remedy some of the evils that I have endeavoured to describe. They need not detain us long, for there is hardly an attempt made to provide any remedies at all, and what is done is utterly inefficient. The scheme of introducing into female schools an education more suited for the girls in after life, is the most promising. But there are many difficulties in the way. Childhood is not the time to learn or understand the chief branches of family and domestic economy: and even if schools could be established to give young women instruction in the arts of life, on the duty involved in the care of children, and in nursing the sick, many could hardly be expected to attend them, for very few could afford such an expensive education, as they would have to find the means of living in the meantime.

Another apparently promising plan is the one adopted by the London Ladies' Association, for the diffusion of sanitary knowledge among the people by means of tracts. But are they read? and if read, are they understood and appreciated? It is difficult to believe it. The ignorant poor, with untrained intellects, are unable to comprehend, or follow written arguments, however plainly stated; and they are moreover so tied and bound by custom and habits, which makes it almost impossible for them to face the trouble and difficulty of learning a new method of living in adult age from tract literature. Besides, as I have said before, they are unconcerned and apathetic on the subject of sanitary knowledge, and have no solicitude whatever for instruction. The tract, therefore, would pretty generally be considered very irksome and toilsome reading, and would soon be thrown aside and forgotten.

Then there is the system of "district visiting," which is now so general that it has become an institution of society. What is the effect of this ministration among the poor? Every one will readily allow that much severe suffering is temporarily relieved and prevented by these ladies; but I will venture to say, that not much *permanent* good results from their visits. On the contrary, evils indirectly grow from this kind of charitable interference, as it tends to discourage self-reliance and self-dependence, and there is therefore a loss of self-respect. It undoubtedly tends also to encourage deceit, insincerity, and hypocrisy among the recipients.

To help the poor effectually, or rather to put them in the way to help themselves, something more is required than the uncertain, aimless though well-intentioned calls of isolated district visitors, without responsibility ; who, as a general rule, have few or none of the qualities for the work, such as special knowledge, confidence, tact, self-reliance, and, above all, *authority*.

When the benevolent mood comes round, the lady not unfrequently goes forth, like a knight-errant of old, in search of charitable adventures among the poor ; but, unlike the knight (who was in grim earnest), she too often merely seeks benevolent entertainment, to relieve the ennui that idleness begets, or when the dreary occupation of "cultivating her mind" has ceased to satisfy her aspirations. Arrived at her destination, she is often tempted (as I have been credibly informed) to lay down the law to the inhabitants, to lecture them about "thrift and care," which must sound in their ears like some wild strain of irony ; for with them hard work and privations are a habit, and to the poor man life itself can only be preserved by making self-denial his practice, and thrift must be the incessant effort of his days, from the cradle to the grave. I believe that she also sometimes threatens them with the terrible doom that awaits them in another world, and gives them a tract, which they can neither profit nor benefit by, to strengthen and fortify her arguments. All this is borne patiently and humbly, for her hearers know from past experience, that after the dose of physic, "which

worretts and gripes them, and yet leaves them much the same," something sweet will be forthcoming in the shape of a shilling, or some broth and meat. I believe, too, that the lady does not very often consider whether she is intruding or not, when she goes uninvited to a poor man's cottage. The idea of intrusion, however, would be very vivid to her, if she thought of paying a similar visit to a family somewhat below her in the social scale, with whom she was not acquainted. But do the poor themselves consider her visits intrusive? I believe not; and it is a sad admission to make, for it is a sign that they have sunk to a melancholy state of degradation. The sacredness of home is in a measure gone, and very little exists of self-respect or self-reliance; while her repeated visits, with gifts of money and food, tend to destroy the little of these virtues that remain.

There are but few things of the truth of which I am more convinced, than that officious and uncere-
monious charitable interference with the poor, though known and felt to be active benevolence, can lead to no good result; for it is the most effectual way of destroying what remains of self-help and self-reliance, and the most certain way of reducing the victims to a degraded state of hypocrisy and beggary. Carlyle, in his forcible way, and in manly and stirring words, says, "Wet feet—mud—frost—hunger, or what you will; but not beggary! Let us stand on our own basis at any rate. On such shoes as we ourselves can get. On frost and mud if you will, but honestly on that:

on the reality and substance which Nature gives *us*, not on the semblance, on the thing she has given another than us!"

It is indeed difficult to conceive a task more saddening and heartbreaking than that which the earnest but untrained district visitor has taken upon herself. She may assiduously attend to her duties year after year, but the longer she lives the more she is convinced that very little benefit results from her labours. Her once sanguine hopes of doing good gradually fade away, and her round of visits, which she still considers it her duty to make, become more and more unsatisfactory and monotonous. Experience has taught her how hard it is to do any good without doing harm, and what barriers, mountains high, are placed between her and those whose condition she is fruitlessly endeavouring to improve. It is like the work of Sisyphus, who was for ever doomed to roll up stones, which came down again inevitably.

If the old proverb that "cleanliness is next to godliness" be true, what a theme for the pulpit, and what a field for practical usefulness for the ministers of religion! Unfortunately, however, the majority of our religious teachers (especially among dissenters) consider that spiritual remedies are sufficient, and that "we labour too much for the perishable body." But I believe spiritual appliances to be useless if the arts of life and the first principles of sanitary science are ignored. To give a tract, or to go and read the Bible, to ill-clad, half-starved men and women, in a dirty room, amidst

noisome smells, and with their digestion spoiled by bad cookery, is a mistake; for all the thoughts of these unhappy persons are engaged in a daily struggle for existence, and they have not the heart or wish for elevation, spiritually or intellectually. First remove the obstacles in the way; that being accomplished, spiritual instruction would be received, and bear fruit in due season; for the seed of Christianity would be sown in a soil prepared to receive it. It is now sown at a vast expense and great labour, amidst thorns and briars which choke it.

The works of nature are frequently dwelt upon in sermons, as evidences of the wisdom and goodness of God; but the beneficent, although unerring and unchangeable laws which regulate the material universe, as well as the equally unchangeable physiological laws, upon which the continuance of life and health depends, are seldom alluded to or studied. But it is certain that these laws exist, although unseen, and move sternly on; and if we ignore them, or live in opposition to them, it is equally certain that we shall be crushed by them.

And, furthermore, the diseases and suffering which so many persons ignorantly and unconsciously bring upon themselves, do not end with each individual, but are multiplied to all time. For it is a law of nature, that the sins of the fathers shall be visited upon the children, and the seeds of disease are thus transmitted to future generations. Indeed every hereditary malady, if traced back, would be

found to have originated in the wilful or ignorant transgression of a sanitary or physiologic law.

It is, therefore, sad to reflect that so much human misery and pain should arise from ignorance of a few simple laws, to live in accordance with which is to do the will of the great Creator of those laws; while to break them, or to live in opposition to them, is to suffer the sharp and inevitable penalty annexed to transgression.

If more scientific and rational views, then, of the proximate causes of pain and suffering were more generally held by our religious instructors, an incalculable amount of good might be done by such a large body of educated men, who have so much intercourse and influence with the poor. But as long as epidemics, as well as other diseases, are looked upon as something supernatural, and a direct visitation of Providence,—and as long as scientific facts, which indisputably prove the contrary, are frowned upon,—the difficulties and obstacles, already sufficiently numerous, which stop the way of improvement, are greatly added to.

Moreover, it is a mischievous doctrine to preach that disease and physical evils are direct visitations of Providence, and that they are intended to subserve high moral ends, for the tendency of such teaching is to encourage acquiescence in confusion, disorder, and mismanagement. It is clearly our duty to labour incessantly, and to use every means to extirpate those causes which lead men and women ignorantly to transgress natural laws, for the inevit-

able result of their transgression must be misery and pain.

There are, however, among the clergy of the Church of England, many scientific and intellectual men who earnestly devote their time and talents to the promotion of sanitary and social reform, and who are well aware that, as long as the physical condition of the industrial classes remains as it is, religious instruction cannot be received, nor can any moral improvement be expected.

In a sermon recently published, the Rev. Sydney Turner says, "It is a mockery to ask God to keep us from the pestilence that walketh in darkness, and the sickness that destroyeth at noonday, if we allow the fœtid nuisances and the filthy dwellings which breed disease and misery among us. It is mere self-deceit to preach virtue and denounce vice while we tolerate the condition of scores, both in our town and country districts, where we know promiscuous intercourse and shameless exposure must deaden every sense of decency, and make licence and brutality the normal state of the inhabitants."

And the Rev. Charles Kingsley, in a paper lately printed, states, that "it is pretty generally confessed that we possess sanitary knowledge sufficient (could we but apply it) to exterminate pestilence, and probably most forms of zymotic disease; that we could make our cities very nearly as healthy as the country—could considerably lengthen the average duration of human life, and could bring up the rising generation under circumstances almost certain

to produce the highest health and vigour. But it is confessed, on the other hand, that though we know how to do all this, we are not doing it, nor are likely to do it."

I have perhaps said enough to prove that some organised system is urgently required, more fitted to cope with the numerous evils around us than any yet adopted; and also that sentimental sympathy and charitable doles are nothing more than opiates to palliate and give temporary relief, while we look on without making any effort worthy of the name to cure the disease, or to prevent its recurrence.

The poor have a right to some treatment quite different than this at our hands. They have a right to call upon us who profess to believe in the Christian faith, and who have the power and the means to remove some of the most pressing difficulties which impede and distract them at every step, and to show them how to find a field, free from deadly obstructions, for the battle of life. It is not our money, but our knowledge and our science that they have a claim upon, and if we continue to refuse them that (which makes them poor indeed) a day of retribution will come; for our boasted Christianity and civilization will be discovered to be a sham, if the upper twenty thousand misapply the knowledge and advantages bestowed upon them, and allow the lower twenty millions to struggle on as best they can, in a pit of dark despair, disease, and early death.* The labouring poor have a right to be

* The following table is taken from Mr. Chadwick's Report on the

taught how to escape from the terrible epidemics and other diseases which daily work such havoc among them. Why, they know not. But *we* know, and we also know, that the causes are removable. Shall we, then, not try to remove them? It is breaking human hearts that appeal to us,—Rachel weeping for her children, because they are not.

After this short survey of the present helpless state of the labouring poor in times of sickness, as well as of the ill effects arising from ignorance of sanitary laws, and of the arts of life, I come to the important and difficult question of a remedy for those disorders which are curable.

As I have already hinted, no real practical help can be given with any prospect of success except by persons possessing special knowledge, and who have been trained for the work. It is absolutely necessary that they should have some acquaintance with sanitary science, the laws of the human frame, and with the arts of life; for before the remedy can be applied, the causes must be explained, and when that is accomplished, much future misery will be

Sanitary Condition of Great Britain. The figures tell their own tale, and require no comment:—

AVERAGE AGE AT DEATH.

	Gentry and their families.	Labourers.
Rutlandshire	52	38
Derby	49	21
Bethnal Green	45	18
Leeds	44	19
Manchester	38	17
Bolton	34	18
Liverpool	35	15

prevented, when ignorance or thoughtlessness is the remote cause.

“For evil is wrought by want of thought
As well as want of heart.”

Clearly, then, the work, if done at all, can only be done by women specially trained, qualified, and paid for their services; in fact, missionaries of health and domestic economy. And their business would be a serious one, and not to be pursued in a random, irregular, inconstant way, but with just as much settled purpose, in as regular and distinct method, as any other profession or business to which we devote ourselves, and by means of which we live.

Before I proceed to consider the best and most practicable way of carrying out in detail the object in view, the important preliminary question presents itself—Can such women be found? After full inquiry, I reply that they are ready made to our hands if we would only employ them. There are at the present time two large institutions in London established for the purpose of educating and training intelligent women of high character as nurses. These “sisters” are trained in the London hospitals, and they are in every way qualified to perform all the various duties that would be required of them. Should there be a general demand for such an order of nurses, a wide field of useful and honourable labour would be opened for women, and a sufficient supply to meet it would, doubtless, be forthcoming. But there is, as yet, no demand for them, except among the higher classes.

Now, having secured a nurse properly qualified, how can she be introduced to those who are most in need of her services? Before anything can be done, there must be not only local effort, but the guidance and encouragement of organised association; a system which could give weight and authority. It would be chiefly, therefore, through means of institutions with established machinery—medical charities, for instance, and especially *provident dispensaries*—that such persons could be effectively introduced. For it is a great point gained, when the working man and his family have been induced to become members of a body; to have their names written down in a book; to have cards in their possession to show that they are members of a society which is supported by their own contributions. This being gained, a bond of union is established between all parties for their mutual benefit. There is an *esprit de corps* which tends more than anything else to lift men above their nature. It also keeps up fellow-feeling, for all the members have a common interest and a common duty which is undeniable, plain, and easy. It has, in addition, a direct tendency to foster provident habits, self-reliance, and self-respect, without any sacrifice of independence; and, what is above all, it does away with the sense of degradation which must always attend the reception of gratuitous charity. These great advantages being secured, there would be a better chance of obtaining the vigorous co-operation of the working classes themselves; for without their own co-operation nothing can be done at all.

The important services that an educated and trained nurse would be able to confer in times of sickness could not fail to be valued and appreciated; and she would, undoubtedly, soon become the most popular and trusted officer in connexion with the institution that employed her. She would co-operate with the medical attendant in the most efficient manner to accelerate the recovery of the sick by effectively carrying out his orders and directions; while she could, at the same time, teach the younger members of the household the way to do it; and the lesson under such circumstances would not be easily forgotten. Moreover, her presence would inspire the sufferer with confidence, and she would be the means of diffusing happiness and satisfaction, and restoring peace and order to a distracted household.

When thus fairly introduced to families who are in sore need of her services, what a field for practical usefulness lies before her! and what opportunities she would have for practically instructing them in the laws of health and the arts of life; without the slightest chance, too, of exciting in their minds any sense of intrusion; for she would not go to them in the garb of charity, as they would have the same right to her services as they have to the attendance of the medical officer provided for them. Besides, she would only go where she was really wanted. But, as severe illness, with all its perplexities and miseries, is seldom long absent from humble dwellings, there would be no lack of opportunities for bestowing her useful aid. Again, by the skilful per-

formance of kindly offices, feelings of mutual confidence could not fail to be established between her and the working man, which could never or seldom exist between him and the district visitor, whose visit is an act of condescension; for he feels that the lady can *do* nothing for him but give him charity, and question him, kindly it may be, but magisterially, about his household economy, his income, and the outward details of his life.

It is clear that the nurse would in this way obtain great influence over the family, and that frequent opportunities would be presented to her for rescuing many from the degradation and squalid misery they live in, by instructing them how to avoid the evils which ignorance necessarily entails, and which knowledge will certainly prevent. She would, for instance, be able to explain to them effectively that the fevers and other sickness that afflict them are caused by the absence of cleanliness and ventilation,—by the filth and dirt around them sending forth poisonous exhalations. If the working classes could only be made to know and understand that a great amount of the disease and suffering they undergo arises from the unhealthy state of the atmosphere breathed in their own homes, there cannot be a doubt but that they would, without any hesitation, use the means within their reach for remedying so great an evil.

If, therefore, the assistance of intelligent nurses could be secured, it is difficult to believe that they would leave any house they once entered exactly in the same state as they found it: some amount of

permanent good must have been accomplished ; some useful knowledge must have been gained, however ignorant and degraded the inhabitants may have been ; for there are but few instances in which simple sanitary rules cannot be intelligibly explained and carried into effect, so that ignorance need not be pleaded as an excuse for the neglect of the duties enjoined. If, however, after every effort has been made to explain the ordinary laws of health and disease, the labouring poor still continue to ignore them and live in opposition to them, their sufferings will be deserved, for they then become the chastisement which follows sin. "To him that knoweth the good, and doeth it not, to him it is sin."

Again, if the sanitary condition of the poor were in a more satisfactory state, and if an efficient system of nursing were adopted, another great advantage would be gained ; for there would then be less need for removing the sick from their own homes and friends, into our over-crowded public hospitals, where they run the risk of contracting and dying from diseases peculiar to those institutions ; such as hospital fever, hospital gangrene, and erysipelas. The accumulation of a large number of diseased persons in one building is indeed a great evil, for the diseases just mentioned, as well as others, are absolutely manufactured in those premises, and which are unknown elsewhere. The utility, therefore, of our ill-arranged and badly-ventilated English hospitals as curative institutions, are exceedingly equivocal.

But to return to the nurse :—From what has been

already said, it is clear that the kind of person contemplated is to be not only an attendant upon the sick, but the friend and adviser of the poor, in all that concerns their daily life and temporal welfare. She should therefore be well informed in all matters that conduce to make the life of the working man a more successful affair than he makes of it at present. She ought, for instance, to be able to give information concerning the rules and regulations of provident and friendly societies; of all kinds of clubs; questions concerning the pawn-brokers' shops; lending libraries, and cheap periodicals, of a wholesome tendency. It would also be very desirable if she had some knowledge of law, as far as it concerns the poor, such as the law of settlement and removal; marriage and judicial separation; the recovery of debts, and other similar questions.

If boards of guardians could be induced to employ such an order of nurses, they would come officially and most usefully in contact with the lowest and most degraded classes of the community. But it is probably hopeless to expect them to adopt any such scheme, on account of the expense that it would necessarily entail: and it would be mere waste of time to make any appeal to them on Christian principles, or on the score of humanity. If, however, they could be persuaded to believe the well-established fact, that money spent to guard against disease, is the greatest economy; that prevention is cheaper than cure; and that a large amount of the poor-rate is referrible to the item of disease

which is preventible; that it is a pecuniary mistake, not to remedy a system attended by such disastrous consequences,—and, moreover, if they would only consider the inestimable value of health, how utterly empty all other advantages are when that has gone, and that there is nothing in this world that can compensate for it—we might hope to see some such plan as I have endeavoured to sketch, adopted by every board of guardians in populous districts throughout England.

Many influential people are of opinion, that the kind of work described should be done for love, and not for money; in fact, from religious motives only. But if we look around and contemplate the numerous religious sects and parties existing in this country, and attended too by so much bitter animosity, it will be granted by most unprejudiced persons, that an element of failure would be introduced which would be fatal. The duties of the nurse should therefore be strictly confined to the affairs of this present life, and she should be responsible only to the committee who employed her. Besides, in England we require to be paid for what we do, and there are many objections to unpaid labour, even if there was a sufficient supply of what is required, which is not the case. There are very few ladies who could undertake the menial duties that would be required of them, and none at all who are qualified for the work by special training. After much thought, I believe that all ideas about gratuitous services from religious motives, in connexion with our public institutions, must be

abandoned; as the system would be altogether impracticable, and, as far as out-door work is concerned, undesirable; for it would be opposed to the spirit of self-help and self-dependence.

I do not think it can be fairly said that I have been exaggerating the importance of one peculiar scheme of usefulness to the depreciation of others; for, after much consideration, I feel convinced, that unless some such organised system as I have imperfectly indicated can be carried out on a large scale, the question of improving the sanitary condition of the labouring poor is a hopeless one. I believe that no other way can be devised so likely to overcome the gross ignorance of the laws of health among the industrial classes; and that no machinery can be planned so likely to conquer the steady and determined opposition to all improvement, which always accompanies ignorance.

If the clergy, ladies, and other benevolent persons, are to be anything more than relieving officers to the poor, they will cease to waste so much of their time and money in giving casual relief in a hap-hazard way, which encourages nothing but beggary; and if they will devote their money and benevolent zeal to forming and efficiently carrying out some well-considered scheme on the principles I have tried to advocate, I will venture to assert that marked results would follow their efforts. Neatness and cleanliness of the dwelling, as well as of the person, might in time be reasonably looked for. Food would be prepared in a way to nourish and sustain, instead of being the fruitful cause of

indigestion, and the train of evils that follow in its wake. The importance of fresh air and ventilation would be perseveringly dwelt upon; the rules for preserving health would be explained and made intelligible; in fact, some improvement of the home would be accomplished; and a pleasant home life is indeed everything, for, without it, I believe it to be utterly useless to take any steps towards the moral improvement of the working classes. The advantages to those benefits would be so apparent, that their example would be gradually followed, for example is more eloquently persuasive than speech. The poor would, after a time, find that it was their interest, in every possible way, to adopt every possible sanitary improvement.

By thus co-operating, we may minimize the existing causes of misery and suffering, and we may be able to counteract the evils, and check their rate of increase. And by so doing, we shall certainly save many unfortunate men and women, otherwise doomed to disease, destitution, and death. And this co-operation to teach the people how to live, will help to nourish the spirit which should ever urge us to love our neighbours as ourselves. Moreover, while we cheerfully and actively seek to carry out those beneficent laws, by which we live and move and have our being, and which give disease if we live in opposition to them, and health if in accordance with them,—we may insure to ourselves a hopeful and contented spirit, sustained by the sense of doing our duty as well as we can, and by so doing, we best prepare ourselves to submit cheer-

fully to the decrees of Providence, and whatever destiny may await us.

“ Not enjoyment, and not sorrow,
Is our destined end or way ;
But to act, that each to-morrow
Finds us farther than to-day.

“ Let us, then, be up and doing,
With a heart for any fate ;
Still achieving, still pursuing,
Learn to labour and to wait.”

•

